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ABSTRACT

This report is a synthesis of interviews conducted during the youth employment survey to determine the most appropriate role for Boys Clubs in responding to the employment needs of youths. Quotes and anecdotes are provided from the interviews with 360 young people, Boys Club staff, board members, business people, educators, community leaders, parents, and others. An introduction is followed by profiles of five young people's experiences with the reality of work. They represent these groups: the forgotten, lonely ones; average, normal teenagers; the able and ambitious ones; those who leave school; and the hard-knocked kids. The next section presents a many-angled view of work and its impacts on the lives of Black, Hispanic, Chicano, White, Native American, and Asian youths, aged 10-21. The adult perspective is the focus of the next section. It considers the responsibility of those in position to help--home and parents, schools and educators, communities and employers, and Boys Club staff. A list of survey conclusions and implications for Boys Clubs is divided into these categories: development of motivation and self-confidence, development of work attitudes and skills, acquisition of job and career skills, and job development. The final section discusses program initiatives that have been suggested by survey conclusions and implications that are most appropriate for emphasis in Boys Clubs. (YLB)

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Youth and Jobs: About Being

Just Right

National Program Development Services / Boys Clubs of America

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BOYS CLUBS OF AMERICA

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The Youth Employment Survey Report to the Lyndhurst Foundation

Youth and Jobs: About Being

The **Just Right** Person

National Program Development Services / Boys Clubs of America

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The Youth Employment Survey Report to the Lyndhurst Foundation

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William R. Bricker
National Director
Boys Clubs of America

Introduction

"You have to be just right to get a job, not over- and not under-qualified, not too few and not too many skills. It's really hard to be the ***just-right person,*** *and I'm not sure I can be."*

The Problem

The youth employment problem is born in the grating of myths and expectations against unsynchronized realities.

A disgruntled businessman from a town that hugs the bank of the Mississippi River expresses a frustration that is echoed daily in small and large businesses throughout the country: "What's wrong with the kids these days? Sixteen years old and you can't count on them to earn the money you got to pay them."

After three weeks of filling out job applications and hearing the all too familiar "We'll call you," a 17-year-old boy from a Mississippi River town speaks about some of the frustrations shared by thousands of youths throughout the country: "They all say 'We'll call you,' because they're polite. What they're really saying is 'Get out of here, you punk kid!' Now tell me, how do they expect us to get experience, to learn how to do a job, when they won't even give us the opportunity to try one out? Where do they expect us to learn about work, anyway?"

Young people are disabled by a pervasive myth purporting that youths should absorb from their life experiences the skills and attitudes needed to function in the world of work. The myth insinuates that youths who cannot successfully maneuver through the work place don't have what it takes. The myth alows adults to shrink from the responsibility of assisting youths in preparing for work and facilitating their entry into the job market. The myth is destructive and its followers need to be confronted with the realities: *

☐ For the past five years, young people of ages 16-25 have accounted for nearly one half of all unemployed persons, even though they account for only one quarter of the labor force.

☐ Nearly two million teenagers are unemployed; that means 20 percent of the youths seeking jobs can't find them.

☐ In the ghettos, the teenage unemployment rate jumps to an estimated 40 percent. Taking into account the thousands of teenagers who have left the labor market altogether, the unemployment rate for central-city black youths would be closer to 60 or 70 percent.

☐ In 1975, about 75 percent of the 18 and 19 year olds in the inner cities dropped out of school. These dropouts have twice the unemployment rate of their peers who graduated high school.

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*This information is taken from the Vice President's Task Force on Youth Employment, January 1980.

Frequent attempts to address the needs that result from these situations — job training and employment counseling services — have had minimal impact.

Boys Clubs, too, have attempted such programs. A large portion of the unemployed are inner-city youths — those with whom Boys Clubs have significant contact. Boys Club workers have witnessed firsthand some of the grim realities of this problem.

They have seen that unemployment doesn't just mean not having a job. It reaches into every aspect of young people's lives. It influences their sense of self-esteem, their relationships with peers, the stability of their home life, even their physical well-being.

Unemployment is also a symptom of problems that have accumulated over the years. The Boys Club youths who had problems finding or holding on to a job were the same youths who had trouble in school, at home, or in the games room.

Unemployment both affects and is affected by all aspects of one's life. Youth employment and youth development are irrevocably intertwined.

Employability must be healthily developed beginning during a child's early years, and such development must be emotional, physical, social, and intellectual.

Because Boys Clubs primarily deal with preemployment-aged youths, 6-16 years old and because the Clubs' youth development programs touch upon every aspect of the young people's lives, it is both sensible and appropriate for unemployment prevention programs to be instituted at all Clubs.

The purpose of the youth employment survey was to determine the most appropriate role for Boys Clubs in responding to the employment needs of youths. A conversational research method was utilized to focus directly on the problems and concerns of Boys Club youths seeking employment. In 22 cities across the country a total of 360 personal interviews were held; over 175 interviews were conducted with youths, exploring their experiences with work and its relationship to their lives at home, at work, and at play; interviews were conducted with 185 adults — Boys Club staff, board members, business people, educators, parents, and other community leaders — to obtain a perspective on the resources, attitudes, expectations, and experiences of people who work within systems that provide services and jobs for youths.

An effort has been made to discover what the obstacles to employment are in varying cases, under varying circumstances.

It was also hoped that such a study would disprove the idea that youth are "too lazy" or "too dumb" to get a job and do it well. The study attempts to shed light on the complexity of the problems — the compounding effects of poverty, disrupted family life, illiteracy, prejudice, and lack of proper role models.

As a result of this study, a strategy for Boys Club action has been devised. It is a multifaceted strategy which could result in a number of new programs and services, relating child development techniques to the development of employment skills.

It is hoped that other youth-serving organizations will benefit from the report and share in the suggested program efforts.

The Survey Process

The survey consisted of personal interviews with 360 young people, Boys Club staff, board members, business people, educators, community leaders, parents, and others.

Twenty-two Boys Club sites were chosen, representing a range of communities and problems. Some had employment programs, some did not. Some were large and others small, in both urban and rural settings. A variety of ethnic, social, and economic mixes was included.

Staff members at each Club were asked to choose a representative group of Club members, between the ages of 12 and 21, to be interviewed. These youths had varied backgrounds. Some had worked and some had not; some were highly articulate and others not; some were school dropouts. The only common denominator was that they all came to the Clubs fairly regularly.

There was an attempt to elicit during these unstructured interviews some personal reactions to the world of work. This form of data gathering allowed the interviewees to tell their own stories in their own words.

The Report Format

This report is a synthesis of the youth and adult interviews. The quotes used and anecdotes mentioned are authentic, though the names of participants have been changed. The picture may not always be complete, but it is hoped that some insights into the problems of youth unemployment will be provided. The material should be considered in the spirit of the conversational research method utilized; not only with the mind, but with the entire self, for "Logic alone is a poor prophet. Intuition is needed to complete the picture."*

*Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (J.P. Tarcher: Los Angeles, California, 1980).

Profiles of Five Experiences

"In the back of their mind, everybody has some kind of goal. They might say they don't, but they do. They may be afraid so they just probably don't want to tell you."

A goal, whether kept secret or ackowledged publicly, represents a hope and an expectation about the quality of life in the future. Work is viewed universally by the youths interviewed as critical to their future happiness. The significance of its role and that of a goal in shaping their lives and attitudes is not so well appreciated by those without the opportunity to talk with youths.

These five portraits of young people's experiences depict how their personalities, perspectives, and plans for the future evolve from daily struggles and achievements. The profile breakdowns are not intended to be rigid but to illustrate how a variety of young people trying to make something of themselves are affected by the reality of work.

Group I:
The Forgotten, Lonely Ones

The job interview ended as awkwardly as it had begun. Mark walked clumsily out of the room, hoping his discomfort didn't show. He was certain he'd made a poor impression, for he had not known what to say. He was too unsure of himself to believe otherwise. Mark not only had failed to make a poor impression, but he'd made none.

After the interview Mark rushed to the basketball court, to work off his familiar frustrations about relating to himself and others so poorly.

At age 16, quiet and withdrawn, there is little evidence in Mark's personality that he ever made a difference in anybody's life or ever received recognition. Mark is typical of many young people who, too uncertain of themselves to be assertive, are uncommunicative and undemanding. Perhaps their low self-esteem, their apprehension, or their mistrust contributes to their reticence and inconspicuousness. People who meet them are quick to forget their names and who they are. In his loneliness Mark feels the weight of being forgotten and unacknowledged. In his "kind of, kind of not" way, he describes himself and his activities primarily in negative terms. "I want to work to stay out of trouble. The only reason I got hired on my first job was because I didn't give them any real trouble. But it only lasted three weeks because the store shut down, so that doesn't mean much. Sometimes I just get angry for nothing. I get angry inside, and outside nothing shows."

Even at the Boys Club where Mark spends most of his time, he is a loner, a sideliner among friends and in activities. He says he feels different from the others and doesn't fit in too well.

With indecisiveness and confusion Mark reinforces his poor self-image. When asked whether he would like a job, he says, "A part of me would like a steady job, but another part of me can't make those hours." The reluctant, unprepared part of him wins out. He has never had a job that lasted more than a month. And he continues to shy away from opportunities requiring discipline and decisiveness.

Mark describes the chances of his getting a job as very slim. "You have to be just right to get a job, not over- and not under-qualified, not too few and not too many skills. It's really hard to be the just-right person, and I'm not sure I can be."

Mark goes through the motions of life. Attending school isn't a great chore, for he is compliant and unquestioning. Thinking about getting a job is no burden either, for he rationalizes that the odds of doing so are impossible. "I could try, and I have put in lots of applications, but I know how many other guys are out there, too."

Mark has an equally distorted perception of time. He says, "I can work any hours — in fact I'd like to

work from 3:30 or 4:00, after school, 'til midnight and then all day Saturdays." But when asked why he can't find a job, he says, "Because I don't have any time." He was able to find some extra time by "taking off from school for about a week to go fill out applications. But I haven't been back to check on any of them, and I'm not sure why they haven't called me." He lacks priorities when job hunting.

Mark is tentative and ambivalent about his future. "Probably I'll go to work after I graduate. I've thought about going to college, but I might not." His "once in a while" way of thinking about his future gives him an excuse not to look for a job, for doing so would require more perseverance and commitment than he is accustomed to investing.

Mark's views of his life and the world are one and the same — small. He seems comfortable with what he knows and apathetic about what he doesn't. When asked if he would like or could benefit from additional information about jobs, he says, "I know about making money, and if somebody would give me advice about how to get a job, I'd be glad, as long as they don't make a fool out of me or anything." He is vaguely aware of his own limitations.

Mark doesn't think about life as being fulfilling. It is as if he accepts the little that is given to him, or that he may fall upon, as being the full extent of what life has to offer. He'll survive. He'll exist. But his growth is limited. And nobody will ever notice.

Group II: Those We Take For Granted

What in the world would we do without the group of youths who are average, normal teenagers? They are the dependable, friendly youths in the neighborhood who baby-sit, perform odd jobs, attend school, and participate in the latest fad.

Charlie, the fourth and tallest of six boys, is one such youth who is often taken for granted and perceived as average because of his easygoing, dependable, unprovoking manner. Although he is good-looking with an abundance of friends, he doesn't receive much attention or recognition from adults, perhaps because he hasn't demonstrated any potential to be a leader or troublemaker. Many folks' first impression of Charlie is that he is just an average teenager — a little awkward with words and strangers, (especially adults), a lover of goofs, gags, and good times, and a dreamer without an insatiable hunger to realize his dreams.

An elderly woman neighbor who manages a local newsstand speaks of Charlie and other young people like him. "Now these kids like Charlie aren't going to be the people to grow up and lead our country out of its misery, but they won't be bringing it down either. I imagine they'll make good followers. They'll probably be hard workers and, like their parents, try to make it a little better for their children."

Living in one or another of New York City's boroughs all his life, he has managed to secure his basic needs until now without too much struggle. Charlie describes how, without much practice or

finesse, he easily secured his first job, "My first job I got when I was 13. I happened to be buying something in this store and I hear this guy asking this other guy to sweep. And the other guy says 'No! I don't feel like sweeping right now, I'm tired.' So after I heard this conversation I went up to this black dude and says 'Hey Shorty, can I work here?' I guess I didn't say it quite right, 'cause he said, 'Hey, say it nice!' So I a ked him again, 'Can you use some help around here? I'm a good worker.' He asked how old I was; I say, '14, no 13.' And he said, 'All right, come tomorrow, come every day.'"

Charlie's numerous odd-job experiences, though not exciting or spectacular, demonstrate his reliability and willingness not to shy away from menial tasks. He reflects how his attitude differs from that of some of his friends. "Most kids don't like to work because they think raking yards and cutting grass is for back in the old times. They don't know how much it can mean to their future."

Now Charlie is 15, and with jobs getting tougher to find he feels forced to learn some job hunting strategies. Armed with street sense, he has been able to meet most of his needs by taking advantage of opportunities he bumps into. Until now his friendly smile and accommodating style have been good substitutes for his lack of formal coaching.

Low-paying jobs will no longer provide enough funds to cover his school expenses and, with the competition for jobs increasing, he is concerned about his lack of style and polish. "Ya know, I used to be cool, at least I was getting jobs once in a while, but now I need steady work and I feel kind of shy and awkward. I don't need a lot of money or a big-time job, just something to help out." Charlie has grown up in a home where comforts are modest but within reach. Both parents have always worked and he is proud of their accomplishments. "My Dad has held his job at the fire station for nearly 17 years now, and Mom has always worked as a seamstress. They want me to go to college, but I don't think I'm smart enough, so I've decided to be an electrician. I want to learn something even if I don't make it to the top. At least I'll have experience like my folks."

Patient and conscientious but without much vision, Charlie is growing up normally, with moments of anxiety and times of satisfaction. The future Charlie has chosen will provide the same adequate, secure life-style he has been accustomed to. "I can't expect things to happen overnight, but I'll make progress little by little." As the newsstand lady puts it, "I'm proud of Charlie, not because he'll become a president but because he's a decent kid, smart enough to stay out of trouble that is such a temptation these days. He may never be known outside of this neighborhood, but as far as I can tell, that's good enough for one lifetime."

Group III: The Able and Ambitious Ones

Ariel is a composite character, made up of the experiences and personalities of several young people. Ariel is both male and female, a blossoming adolescent and young adult. Ariel, without much support and with limited financial means, is striving to become somebody. Ariel rarely slips and falls, but on that rare occasion when she/he does, Ariel has the grace and self-confidence to make it a performance. Ariel is growing up all over America:

- ☐ In California, Ariel is a joiner, first of gangs in Mexico and East Los Angeles, then of the Junior Optimist and Boys Club.
- ☐ As a risk taker and achiever, Ariel left a job, high school, mother, and the Ku Klux Klan in Biloxi, Mississippi, and is now working and studying to become an electrician and musician in Seattle.
- ☐ In a Colorado mountain town, on the way to becoming a professional chef, Ariel at 14 has been

passing as an 18 year old for two years in order to get jobs in restaurants.

☐ In upstate New York, Ariel appreciates the ordinary and wonderful, saying "What I like about getting up at five is startin' a new day, just walkin' around, feeling the breeze, deliverin' the papers to earn money."

Although money is often a significant reward for work, it is not primary. Ariel likes to work because: "it is good exercise, fun, exciting, something to do every day. To me, a job is a living." Though remarkably sensitive and mature, Ariel is still hungry to be rid of childish ways. "I remember when I was ten years old I always wanted a job. I'm still like that, but I've got to mature a lot more before I can even start getting good jobs. I need more self-discipline, common courtesy, deciding things with other people, maturing on the job, making sure I know what I'm doing." Ariel gives a clue to the source of this ambitiousness: "I'm from a hard-working family and my father's a real go-getter. He brought me up to be like him, so that's what I am and I like it."

Ariel is practical about preparing for the future. "I'd like to make it in music, but I notice some people are lucky and some aren't. So what I'm going to do is get into the electricity union, so if I don't make it in music, I will have a trade."

Ariel has the savvy and versatility to juggle basic job-seeking skills in any arena. "Well, let's say I'm going for an executive job, so I dress with style. If I was gonna work at a yard job, I'd dress shabbily, 'cause I'd be ready to work."

Ariel is receptive to authority figures. "I would like a very strict boss, because if I'm doing something wrong, I would like to improve in any way I could. I don't mind being yelled at."

Ariel believes in fairness. "The ideal job would be something where I'd get paid fairly. Like if I did more work than everybody else I'd expect to get paid for what I did. I'd like to be friends with everyone in the company and have people appreciate me and be able to appreciate them."

Group IV: Those Who Leave School

"They didn't give me no warning; it was just all of a sudden that they told me to leave and not come back."

"Nobody called, nobody cares. I only went 23 of 115 days last year and they didn't seem to notice. So why should I care?"

"I couldn't hack it anymore. I just got tired of it and quit. I had a job but I didn't tell the school or my family that that was the reason."

Pushed out! Dropped out! Fed up! Youths who leave school share a hope that their lives will be better outside the system that they perceive as uncaring and unresponsive.

The factors contributing to a young person's leaving school include not only the school experience itself, but also neighborhood, family, friends, outside motivations, and pressures. Adults in one area may fail to detect a problem, may fail to see its relationship to a bigger problem, or may assume help is being provided elsewhere. Consequently, the problems are overlooked, undiagnosed, neglected.

Youths are hurt more and more, and are less and less able to ask for help or to help themselves. When such pressures become overwhelming, they find the most convenient excuse to leave school.

The environment and resources available to a youth who has left school before graduating are critical to how well he or she manages. For some, like Jonathan, there are no resources at home to fall back on, nothing after the school experience but more failure. Jonathan is the eldest son in a large Polish family, living in a cramped row house in South Philadelphia. Jonathan's relationship with his mother has always been poor and agitated. Both are uneducated, unemployed, and constantly at each other's throats. His mother ridicules and taunts him about having left school. "You'll never be able to take care of yourself. You're going to wind up just like me, with nothing."

There is no clarity about when Jonathan left school, but whether it was one or three years ago, his stay was brief and, as Jonathan feels, justifiably so:

"I'm not sure just when I stopped going to school. I left 'cause I just didn't like it. I've never been since. I was little, about 10. School was always a drag, anyway. I didn't like none of the teachers or nothing.

"I just stopped going. That was it. They didn't say nothing to me. They didn't ever send a truant officer or nothing to my house.

"I was thinking about going back to school. One day I'm going to go and the next day I forget it. I just don't like to go. One reason I don't want to go back to school is that the people would be a lot smarter than me. I'd rather work than go to school anyway," he reasons, "and if I get a job I'm not going back."

Jonathan enjoyed working for a year with a construction firm owned by his mother's boyfriend, but was ultimately fired after a series of suspicious thefts when he was caught with a masonry trowel.

Although he kept busy on the job, he failed to develop appropriate job attitudes and habits. With bewildering and self-defeating logic he summarizes his knowledge of job hunting strategies and concludes abruptly on a revealing note of hopelessness:

"What I know about getting a job is first of all you don't steal from your job. And like if you wanted a job, you would have to ask. My mother knew somebody and that made it easier for me. If I were just to go out and look for one, I'd probably go someplace around in this district. But there are all stores around here, and I wouldn't want to work in them. So I guess there really ain't nothing for me around here."

Jonathan's own job qualifications greatly impede his employability. "I'd like to do a particular kind of work, not just anything, no restaurant work, or waxing floors, or nothing. No paperboy, that's out. I'd like to do carpentry, construction, just men's work."

Since leaving school and being fired from his job, Jonathan has become anxious and mentally and physically idle. When asked how he spends his time, he says, "To be truthful, I get high. I smoke pot and sit up in my room and listen to some jams."

He doesn't know what would be helpful and wonders if he can be helped. He moans, "Just surviving these days is hard, my mother hardly gives me a chance. In this house you better believe you gotta get depressed. If I ain't depressed I got a headache. Nobody can help me here. I'm going to get out of here and you better believe I wouldn't ever come back."

Not all youths who leave school are so unmotivated or remain so lost and despondent. In fact, they may be more motivated than some of those who stay in school out of compliance and fear. Some, like Jim, leave for a more promising future.

Jim is a soft-spoken, smooth-speaking young man from the foothills of West Virginia. At 16 he left formal education behind and joined the family trade of cement work. "I didn't like the situation at school and what was happening. They said if I could work with my dad, I was better off dropping out. So that is what I did. I'm kind of lucky my dad could get me into a job at all, but if someone else were going to quit school, I might ask them why. I might ask them what they were going to do when they got out. If they haven't got a job, I'd tell them to try to stick it out so they could find one later."

Having a family tradition to climb into eased Jim's adjustment to a nonacademic life. "So far every male person in my family has quit school and gone into construction. My brother, my dad, and all my uncles."

Jim sounds very comfortable about his future plans. "I want to stick to what I'm doing now. Someday my dad might be able to buy the company, and then I'd have a steady income and trade."

The work ethic gives Jim a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and security, and fills a void that frequently troubles young people. He views work as a means to establish and maintain financial security. "I work for money so that I will be able to buy something to show for it and to have credit."

Jim's leaving school has not made him feel like a failure or squashed his ambition. He talks about his goals: "To think that one day I'll be able to say 'I did that' would make me feel good, and to be able to say 'If I wasn't there, it wouldn't have been done' is even better. Some people would say they want to be a doctor and make some kind of cure for cancer, or for the common cold. I can say my work will be in concrete."

Group V: The Hard-Knocked Kids

"I kept saying to myself, 'Lord, don't put nothing on me that I can't deal with,' but honestly I had to question his judgment this time. All of it hit me at once. That's why I can laugh, because now I made it. I'm really glad that these difficulties happened to me at an early point in my life, so that I can learn to deal with them and bounce back."

Diane was beginning to piece her life back together, trying to make essential adjustments for her three-month-old baby. At 16, with dreams to travel, she was confronted with an unplanned pregnancy. After several weeks of torment, trying to decide between her future and her baby's, she chose her baby's. She was forced to drop out of school until the baby was born. During her pregnancy she began to realize that she had always taken her education and future for granted.

"I've been getting more serious about life. There was a time when everything was so easy, you know, just go to school, come home, see friends. I never thought about if I couldn't return to school next year. I just took it for granted. But now I believe this all happened for a reason, to wake me up, straighten me out, and put me in the right direction."

Traumatic experiences often threaten the stability of young people's lives. Serious illness, problems with the law, unexpected pregnancy, and family strife — all of these can drastically change their world. But in the process of regaining their composure they learn to manage, and they develop a resolve to succeed. These young people's struggles with unexpected pain demonstrate the value of stress — if one is capable of turning the threat into a challenge and the pressure into motivation.

Diane's resolve and new direction were based on an appreciation of her vulnerability and a sense of responsibility to her baby. "I've had to have a different outlook on things. I'm much more

educated to life now than I ever was before. I can see now why many people take overdoses and stuff like that. They just can't cope with it. But I found out that when I'm forced to face it, I got what it takes. I didn't know that about myself and never had to know it. It makes me feel real good to know I can face setbacks. Before I got pregnant my choice after high school was to travel, then get married and have a family. I was living in a fantasy world. But it's not that easy, I found out. Now I've got a different outlook — I'd rather be independent."

Diane has worked hard for that independence. Shunned by her family, she got a CETA job, and eventually juggled part-time jobs with evening classes so that she could earn her high school diploma.

These challenges have given her a sense of accomplishment. Her new-found assurance has brought out a determination to continue her growth and a need to work and achieve for herself. "It seemed to me like all my life I was living to make my mother happy, to make somebody in my family proud. But now I feel like all I have to do is just make *me* happy.

"It gives me a reason to live and has helped me realize how important a goal is.

For instance, someone may say to me 'You want to be in the service?' and then you remember what your goal was and you're gonna strive to get it any way you can. If it takes three or four years you're gonna try. But if you haven't got a goal then you say, 'What's the sense of living?' You haven't got anything to live for."

This need to fulfill themselves makes the victims of adversity highly motivated. "I want to be number one. It'll make me feel important. Not that I'm not important now. I know I am. But it'll make me feel like I made it and that after trying to make it and struggling for so long, that it's been worthwhile."

The Youth Perspective

Those in Need of Help

"Now what you gonna do from now on when we don't see you no more? What's gonna happen to us and all the other kids who can't find jobs? What's gonna happen? How long do we wait before we find out if we're getting a job or an education? Take our problem to Congress. Help us out or something."

The way youths express a need for help in finding jobs takes many forms: some are direct, in pleas, questions, suggestions; some are indirect, disguised in anger, violence, or apathy.

All youths are concerned about their future. Whether they enjoy working or not, young people understand that the stability of their life-style is dependent on their ability to work and earn a decent wage.

This section presents a many-angled view of work and its impact on the lives of black, Hispanic, Chicano, white, native American, and Asian youths, aged 10-21.

The overview is a collage of quotations expressing the attitudes, feelings, and needs of youths who are working, looking for work, or unemployed; all are at different stages of learning to take responsibility for themselves.

Development of Work Attitudes

"I'm only human, I don't want to grow up too fast, yet, I don't want to remain immature. What is it. . . growing pains? I really wouldn't know. Like, I want to be grown, but it scares me to be out there on my own.

"After 17 or 18 years of being dependent on your parents, then you want to get out there by yourself. But it kind of stops you and makes you think. This period of my life has got a lot of major decisions needing to be made. I'm always thinking, 'What if I make the wrong decision?' But I'm young enough so I can correct that decision before it's too late."

The quest for independence among youths is classic and universal, rooted in the need to preserve and heighten self-esteem. In its contemporary form the quest emerges in the motivation to work. Among the fortunate, it is a choice. Among those with limited economic means or stressful living conditions, it is a necessity.

The rewards youths seek from work are independence, the mobility and prestige of a car, the distinction of a wardrobe, the excitement of a social life, the security of saving for the future, and the satisfaction and self-confidence of acquiring skills.

The importance of work influences young people long before they reach an employable age. Knowing that at some point they will need and want to shape a comfortable life-style for themselves, they develop expectations about work and what its role in their lives will be. They express these expectations in a variety of ways:

"It troubles me when I start thinking about work, when I start thinking about the future."

"A job is something you might need for a certain time and you go on to another job and keep going from job to job."

"No matter what kind of job you're doing, if you don't enjoy it, you should quit right away; otherwise you're doing yourself and your employer a disservice."

"You got to work for your kids, for a living, to survive."

"A good job, a career, a future, a good place to live, so we don't have to live in the slum when we get older, so the things we didn't have our children can have,"

Rarely is a single event responsible for provoking among youths the realization that work exists and has a critical function and place in their lives. An ebb and tide of sensation, experience, and feeling create a blur of impressions.

The Family

"I learned a lot by watching my dad. Now, I know he has some problems. He's got lots of them. But he doesn't let that get in the way of his job. He goes down there to work and he's not late. He's not out one day unless he's sick. Now, he's a typical worker, you see. I want to take after my dad; then I'll be a winner all the way."

Exposure to work-related disciplines and social skills begins at home. The maintenance of a household and the life-style of its members introduce youths to the attitudes, values, responsibilities, problems, and options connected with work.

Some youths admire and particularly appreciate the support their families provide. A boy from New England, the youngest son of a garbage man, says, "My father works. He does. He could have been like a lot of people I know. He could have been miserable. But he believes in himself, in what he does. He wants me to do the best I can."

In the Northwest, a high school senior says, "Well, I get all the encouragement from my mom. She told me, 'Don't ever give up. Keep on looking for a job. Something will come up.'"

Youths watch the reactions parents bring home from work. "Some days they'd be happy. Some days they'd be mad, and some days they'd be sad and worried about bills and stuff," says one youth.

Youths' attitudes toward work are influenced by the difficulties parents have. A teenage girl speaks of accompanying her mother to job interviews. "I might sit on the steps with the baby and wait for my mother. Many times she came out and said they didn't need her. Many times she went in there and she got the job. She's happy about that."

In an attempt to make sense of what they experience and observe, young people continuously assess and draw conclusions. Based on limited life experience and insufficient knowledge, their evaluations may be distorted. Unfortunately, parents' knowledge about jobs is also limited. The recent flood of books, seminars, and special courses designed to assist adults in developing new careers and securing the best job illustrates the need for job-related information among persons who will be passing on that information to the next generation.

The earlier that youths are given work-related responsibilities and exposed to good work habits, the more comfortable they become with work. Reflecting on his own childhood, a teenager remembers the time he spent with his grandfather: "I was taught if you're going to do anything, do it right. I think it's best to preach to some of the kids at a younger age than to try to put it all in their head when they get older."

He remembers starting to think about work at an early age, when his grandfather asked him to name some things in life that he would be needing. "I told him houses and food and family. Things like that. He said, 'What does it take to get all that?' I said, 'Money.' He said, 'Not only money. Also, you have to have a brain, and then some money.' That's when I started thinking about it."

Family environments provide many opportunities to learn about work — from household chores, allowances, home repair and care of property, and sharing responsibility. Some youths receive more of these than others. Young people who grow up in families in which they are expected to fulfill household chores on a regular basis, who observe adults going to work and managing their lives around work, develop work habits and attitudes that make them more employable. The activity of work is a familiar aspect of life which youths begin to count on to create demands and opportunities.

The Community

"When I see this generation declining, I try to be part of what's good. But there are too many people who ruin it. Like me and my friends are good. We're not trying to ruin our generation. There's other people who like to over-

rule us. They're the fly swatters and we're the flies. We're trying to run away from them, to stop from being killed."

The community in which a young person lives also influences attitudes and abilities. The people living within these same boundaries, the environment, the living arrangements, the smell of the air, the transportation system, the street life, the socio-economic-political makeup, the media, the impact of history and change, all have subtle and marked effects on youths' development and therefore their concept of work.

Some youths find their neighborhoods stimulating, others describe them as oppressive. On the Lower East Side of New York, a densely populated, ethnically diverse community with high adult unemployment and higher youth unemployment, two youths who live in the same city block have sharply contrasting views of their neighborhood and future.

Alex, the 17-year-old son of two working parents, is a high school senior participating in a special work/study program. With a sense of responsibility to himself and his community, he is planning to be a private detective. "Because there are certain things I'd like to see changed on the streets — dope, prostitution. I feel people need the protection they're paying taxes for."

Albert, a youth of the same age, lives down the block. Albert is bright, literate, employable, and very concerned about his future. But he feels trapped and victimized by "the disgusting, filthy, corrupt conditions in the streets that are messing up our brains and killing my friends." Much of his identity is defined in terms of loyalty to his friends — a group of dropouts. He speaks of his future in terms of "we" and not "me." It is more comfortable, less frightening that way. Seeing his future as a continuation of what scares him now, he cries for help: "We need help. What's gonna happen to us and all the other kids? Help us or something."

"Since I've been running the Keystone Club, we've been traveling a lot, and I'll never forget the very first trip. A boy my age sat next to me. He said, 'The train, wow, I can't believe it.' I said, 'Why, what's the matter?' He said, 'I never left the state, I've never been anywhere. All I know is from my street to the Boys Club, to the school. So far, this is as far as I've gone.'

"I sat there and I couldn't believe it, as I watched the kids sort of go into shock. I thought, 'They're enjoying it, learning a lot, yet, they're in shock and not the same people anymore.'

"If kids don't get to see some things outside of their neighborhood, a lot of them will end up working right there, in a factory or with a shovel in their hand, something like that. They won't really be getting what they should be."

Wayne, age 16
Providence, Rhode Island

The Schools

"They probably don't think school is very important now, but when they start getting into their futures and find they need to know how to read and write above the fifth grade level and that being 'bad' isn't good enough, then they'll wish they were school smart."

One of the first jobs youths have is school. Next to family, no other social system has such a pervasive power in their lives. The significance of education as a critical factor affecting their future employment is universally appreciated by youths. They know that getting that diploma is important, though they may not see the value of specific courses or academic programs.

Youths who stay in school do so for a variety of reasons. The fundamental one is that school meets some of their immediate and long-term needs. For instance, a young man who wants to be a musician is able to specialize in band and orchestra at school and participate in extracurricular music activities, all of which help him prepare for his career. Some youths have the opportunity to participate in job-related courses. They say, "The main reason I go to school is so I can go to work and go to school and get paid for doing both." These job-related courses help them tolerate the less relevant academic work. More importantly these youths sense that their teachers are more concerned about them, because the course material is relevant to them, for once.

Some young people are able to enjoy learning and even find the academic courses palatable. They have the ability to adapt, fit into the school structure, sit at a desk for 40 minutes or more, and apply themselves to various tedious disciplines. This ability will later help them adjust on the job.

Having their performance at school rewarded and their achievements acknowledged helps youths feel good about themselves and the various skills they have learned. Doing well and liking to learn are one and the same, especially in school. When someone has taken the time to say, "You are important. You have the potential to do well here, and I'm going to help you learn," youths then believe it may be worthwhile.

The cumulative effect of positive school experiences is to help young people feel good about themselves. Doing well and being rewarded help contribute greatly to developing motivation and initiative.

Unfortunately, not all youths have such fruitful experiences at school. Those lacking the skills needed to take advantage of educational resources perceive the school as an adversary rather than a friend and helper. They resent that the substance of academic material seems so irrelevant. "Show us the real facts of life, not just some English diction," they say. "They don't tell you about jobs, they only talk about math."

"I've always been taught responsibility. My first chance to really experience it was in the basketball or football teams when everybody wanted me to be the captain, stuff like that. And I used to hate it because I didn't want anybody to look to me as an example. But once I got used to it, I realized somebody has to do it."

Carlos, age 16
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Unless youths understand the payoff from aquiring an education, they resent being forced to attend school. They then express this resentment by sabotaging the efforts of teachers by leaving before graduating. For these young people school has ceased to fulfill essential needs. They feel neglected and alone.

A youth's school experience radically affects his/her self-image. Those youths who believe no one cares about them, whether they attend school or not, will have a variety of reactions to this pain. They may act in ways the school finds unacceptable and may begin looking elsewhere for success and affirmation. If these youths continue to notice that their erratic presence, poor performance, and/or disruptive behavior does not muster a positive reaction from somewhere, they'll leave school altogether, feeling hurt, embittered, and unsure of themselves and their future. The fragility of their self-confidence is expressed in anger, depression, and denial. They wonder, "Who gives a damn about what happens to me?" as they grapple with the decision to take the risk of caring for themselves. "The grass is greener" or "has gotta be better" philosophy is a tool youths who leave school prematurely use to ease the transition.

All youths who leave carry a burden of failure. They fear the label of "dropout." They wonder how they should spend their time thinking and planning for the future. Fear of continued failure and rejection tempts them to seek the safest, most pleasurable pastimes. With school so bad, anything else looks awfully good.

Youths who leave school are not motivated. They've left school to involve themselves in activities which they hope will provide them immediate satisfaction. The job, or hope of one, provides an excuse to leave and endows them with an enhanced economic status and identity and a sense of security not found in the regimen of school. But many times the honeymoon with the job deteriorates into a recognition of their limitations in competing and becoming successful in the job market. Their youthfulness and lack of education and skills become

"We're not dumb and we don't want to stay out of school; we just ain't got the place. We want a future, a career, a good job. . . a decent place to live, so we wouldn't have to live down in the slum when we get older, so the things we didn't have, our children can have. We want to grow up and be somebody. Around here the only thing you're going to be in a couple of years is probably dead. You want to go to school and they stop you from going 'cause you get beat up.

"We're not happy with who we are. Ya know how come? 'Cause we want to go out there and become someone. We need somebody to help us get into a school where we could study, 'cause around here you can't learn nothing. Ya know what one teacher told us ? — If we don't want to learn, we don't have to. Instead of telling us, 'You're going to learn something today,' he comes in and says: 'Any of you's want to go home, go home now. Don't give me no trouble. I want to sit here and do my job.' He used to read comic books and he would say: 'It don't make no difference to me whether you learn or not. I'm still getting paid.'"

Leo, Albert, and Edgar
ages 16 and 17
New York, New York

soberingly clear. These youths are most often in limbo, without the help and guidance needed to establish purpose and direction in their lives. The relief of being away from the pressures of school wanes as a painful realization of their aloneness sets in.

There is one more group, which is between those who enjoy school and those who leave. These are the youths who are only marginally involved with the schools. They attend regularly, but receive no special attention or recognition because they are neither outstandingly good nor troublesome. They may spend only 30 minutes with the guidance counselor throughout their entire four years of school. They select a course of study reflecting that of their friends, rather than developing an awareness of their own needs and talents, and taking advantage of the special resources offered by the schools.

Unaware of the narrowness of their choices, they stay in passive compliance. "Sometimes, like once a year, guidance counselors come in and talk about different kinds of jobs and what education you should select, and all that stuff. But no, it's not enough." They may think they shouldn't even ask for extra help or advice, because they don't believe they are worth special attention.

These youths will complete school feeling unprepared and lacking confidence and skills. If they do not have plans to attend college or a special training center, they will not be able to postpone their fears and questions about how to move successfully into a job and manage their lives satisfactorily.

Youths who participate in career planning and exploration classes, however, acquire a stability and maturity that make their lives at home and at school more satisfying. They feel more confident about themselves and their future.

The Boys Club

"This is a place where I'll be and I'll like being. It's like home. It's where I first started playing football. I made my first speech and won my first award here. It's a place where all kinds of people mix that don't on the streets."

Boys Club youths continually carry in and out of the Club an unsatiated hunger for more — more love, challenges, support, reinforcement, hope, skills, friends, and knowledge. Some use it as a place of refuge. They come to the Club to play, hang out, hide, work, eat, share a problem or a success, or pick a fight. "Somebody in here gives you a chance to try, and I'm glad somebody had the patience to tolerate me," says one youth.

Eager for work, or money, Boys Club youths frequently ask club staff for jobs or information about jobs. The idea of working at the Club, in a familiar environment, close to home, with people they know and trust, is appealing. A few are fortunate to be employed in part-time jobs within the Club, in janitorial, clerical, or activity-related positions. Frequently a youth will move from one department to another to gain a variety of skills and experience.

For most youths, the Club work is positive in that it provides them with insights and discoveries about work needs. They begin to make connections between interest and ability and choosing a job. A Los Angeles youth, whose first job had been as a janitor for the Boys Club, says, "It really helped me because I've used what I've learned as a janitor in other situations. It's the little things you learn that help you after."

Working at the Boys Club builds confidence and provides experience that regenerates itself. A teenage girl from the South who tried unsuccessfully for eight months to get a job was later employed at the Boys Club. After she worked several months in the library as

a tutor with younger children, her mood began to shift from pessimism to "I know now I can leave anytime, 'cause now I know I can get another job." In her brief employment with the Boys Club the job market in her own town did not change, nor did the eagerness of employers to hire unskilled teenagers increase, but her outlook, her belief in herself, and her determination greatly improved.

Michael, a 17-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, has been working in various positions at the Boys Club. Most employers would not have been able or willing to try Michael out in four different positions over a year's time. But without this experience, his work ability would have been very limited.

The Boys Club offers youths work experiences which expose them to values that may differ from those of their families. The differences or even clashes in values may be troublesome, yet they may also provide an opportunity for people to begin making conscious choices about their own values. Interaction in areas such as volunteering, managing conflict, and expressing feelings and attitudes are often problematic in the Boys Club, for the way the staff expect youths to act may differ from the way they are accustomed to acting at home or on the streets.

Although a youth's work experience at the Boys Club is a valuable one, the job is not without its difficulties. Some of the problems are common to most low skilled, entry level jobs — repetitive tasks, inadequate knowledge of skills required, poor supervision. However, there are problems more indigenous to the Boys Club. For example, some problems evolve out of the caring, informal, recreational atmosphere that Clubs strive to nurture: "I came because it's home, my home, it's the place to be," says an 18-year-old Boys Club veteran

Youths who have been brought up in the Boys Club often have illusions about what working in such a fun place is all about. Although Boys Club staff play an important role in providing positive working role models, many youths do not understand what is involved in having a Boys Club job until they experience it.

Several Boys Club members say they had anticipated that a Boys Club job would be easy, but thought differently after they actually began working. They were confronted not only with a routine and structure they had failed to notice during their prejob activity, but also with the realization and challenge of now being a role model for youths their own age and younger. They painfully recognized the limits of their leadership and inter-personal skills.

While many Clubs provide preservice and on-the-job training to equip youth workers with these skills, the pace of Club life often preempts the youths getting adequate training. Yet nearly all the youths interviewed said clearly that they would *welcome* their Boys Club helping them to prepare for and find a job.

They mentioned a variety of ways this could be done. "They could have some kind of counseling, or class, like they have in school to prepare you for certain jobs." "First I'd say you've got to open up a training station so you can learn some skills and know what you're doing. Say in welding, if they put in

training for boys in the Boys Club, that would be really good because a boy could say, 'I've been welding ever since I was 14 years old.'"

The need for skill development and confidence building was emphasized by many youths. One new member expressed it this way: "The Club can help them feel like taking new risks."

Finding a Job

"It's hard finding a job because you don't know where to go or who to go to. That's why you've got to know what you can do before you go out there and try to do it. That's what I found out myself, the hard way."

Young people realize "there is something about being a teenager" that makes it difficult to get a job. Whatever this "something" is often eludes and frustrates them. Very often the problem lies in their own lack of preparation. Many times, youths initiate a job search with little knowledge, and through trial and error discover what they believe to be the helpful balance of skill and savvy. Without guidance this experiential learning is rough-hewn at best.

If youths' previous life experiences are impoverished, job search behavior will reflect these limitations. Failure is blamed on themselves, the boss, the circumstances, or bad luck.

Looking for a job without being prepared is not necessarily a deliberate or rebellious choice. Many youths just assume they already have the required information. And many adults, too, assume that anyone old enough to work should be old enough to know most of what's needed.

This assumption inhibits young people from asking for information for fear they may appear stupid, or, ironically, unemployable. They may not be aware of the few services designed to provide assistance, or they believe that those that do exist will not help them.

Out of frustration, and after repeated failure to secure a job, a young woman devalues the local job service in her town. "You can't go to the employment office around here and look for a job because you're going to get hassled. I either don't have enough education or have too much; either I don't have enough experience or I have too much."

Most youths would be unable to identify the major steps in the job hunt process. And structural barriers in the social system, such as the restrictive labor laws, minimum wage requirements, limited public transportation and scarcity of jobs, make the job hunt even more difficult. Youths' limited experience, level of maturity, and understanding of appropriate job attitudes also diminish their employability. But the fact remains that youths view work as the key to their future happiness, and they *want* to work.

Some youths have more appropriate attitudes about the qualities needed to secure a job. Their ability to analyze these qualities and apply them helps in the job search. Some youths know that their attitude toward people is crucial in finding a job. "I think if you master your attitude and temper, you'll get along with most anybody," says one youth. "As long as you remember people don't have to like you, but they must respect you."

An articulate 18-year-old, after interviewing for a job at a fast food restaurant, said, "You have to give the impression that you really enjoy what you're doing. You have to make the employer think you care about what you're doing."

Many youths can identify the characteristics of an attractive employee: "To be neat, have a good attitude about work, a good personality, to be a person who's capable of doing it." But they still cannot identify why they are unable to find a job. "They just don't hire me, I guess." They have not learned to look at themselves with the same keenness of observation they use to look at others and at situations outside of themselves.

Most youths interviewed feel quite certain that anyone who really wants to find a job can do so. "You really have to be lazy not to find a job," says a young man without a job. "Kids around here, they think the job's going to come to them. But you have to go out and look for it. You can't just sit around and wait. You know kids even my age are just shy or embarrassed to call to find out things. You've got to do it yourself."

Many youths don't understand the need for such initiative and perseverance. They move rapidly through their small repetoire of job hunting strategies — filling out numerous applications at the fast food restaurants, grocery, and department stores — and then just sit back and wait.

In February a youth says in bewilderment, "I believe during this past summer I went to about a hundred places and put in an application, and no one has called me as of today." This youth seems to believe that to contact the employer again is rude, unnecessary, a display of desperation, or an act requiring courage he doesn't have. He and his friends are unaware that timing, circumstances, and luck play major roles in getting a job and that they may have to retrace their steps continuously, keep on the track, and be ready to respond to an employer's nod. They view getting a job as a very impersonal, uncontrollable experience. "They just put my application in a file cabinet. Whenever they start laying off people and then they start hiring them back, they'll just go off and get those applications and see who they want."

For some youths, looking for a job is a strange and threatening procedure. Besides having to confront the external difficulties, youths are frequently halted by their fears and anxieties. Fear of failure, of the unknown, of growing up, and of responsibility and change troubles some youths as much as not being given a chance bothers others.

Youths are not always able to express their apprehensions directly. Fear may be translated into an apparent reluctance to find a job. They rationalize, "There aren't any jobs, so why look?" or blame themselves for the system's limitations, "I'm stupid, so why go to school? I can't find a job either, so I'll steal. I'm just a kid, what do I know?"

For real or imagined reasons, many youths are not willing to take a job outside of their familiar neighborhood. "I want a job this summer, but if I have to take a bus I'm not going." They may say they don't have the money for a bus, forgetting that they'll be earning money. But what they're really afraid

of is being out of their element. Ignorant of the power structure in another neighborhood, they might feel different, unaccepted, or hurt.

Unfamiliar with what will be expected of them on the job and what the work site will be like, youths have an understandable degree of anxiety about their first jobs. They wonder what the other people will be like. Will they like me? Are they different from me? How old are they? What's their ethnic background and where do they live? What happens if I make a mistake? Will I be able to talk to my boss? Will he or she be fair?

Before their first work experience, most youths believe there is a high level of rigidity and intolerance of human error in the workplace. Such a misconception contributes to mistakes and problems. Many youths, however, realize that fears eventually disappear. "I see kids afraid of work, 'til they get started. And then they like it. It's just that you've got to get them started."

Given the opportunity to share their anxieties, youths will identify their fears and fantasies about the world of work they so want to be a part of. This points up a nearly universal need for additional education and support in helping youths prepare themselves for work. Some youths are aware of this need, others are not. When introduced to the idea, most welcome the opportunity to participate in a job preparation program, "as long as they talk to me straight, not down to me."

Initiating and successfully conducting a job search requires self-confidence, motivation, and social and attitudinal skills. Self-esteem is a barometer of a youth's success on the job; it is the most important factor in helping youths persevere through the often difficult process of obtaining and retaining a job.

Lack of self-confidence contributes to youths' saying it is someone else's responsibility to find them a job. They become dependent and angry, see themselves as victims, and remain unemployed.

THE JOB ITSELF

"Working is fun. It feels good when you have a decent job. You can go to work, come back home, and get a decent pay. You have some experience, and people think you're important."

Youths who are fortunate to work begin to look at themselves and their expanding world more seriously. Maturity is enhanced by the pride emerging from fulfilling responsibilities, by receiving recognition and a wage for achievements, and by beginning to establish a life-style independent of their families.

In Colorado, a 14-year-old boy who has been working since he was 12 at various restaurants secures his jobs by saying he's 18. His mature appearance certainly eases his way, but the significant aspect of his clever deception is his solid self-confidence and certain, mature manner. Each job he has reinforces his employability and strengthens his ability to overcome the barrier that his actual age presents. He has dared to ask to be treated as a competent young adult, and has succeeded in demonstrating his worthiness.

Sometimes, though, the illusion of "having arrived" when the job is secured may be shattered by the difficulties of the job. "Sometimes getting a job can be hard, but keeping the job can be a lot harder," says one young person.

Youths try to adjust their daily routine to the demands of a job. The initial excitement of a paycheck may diminish because of the changes and compromises required by the job.

The entry level, low skill jobs youths are usually restricted to are routine and repetitive, often requiring a great deal of perserverance, and with limited rewards. Youths who view these jobs

as stepping stones to more challenging positions and opportunities manage better than those who fail to see the intangible rewards of these initial work experiences.

The expectation of having a certain kind of job experience is often jarred by the discovery of unforeseen working conditions. One young man who wanted to be a physical therapist thought any job in a hospital setting would be exciting and educational. He obtained a records-clerk position, which confined him to a secluded basement room filled with office equipment and records — not the dynamic environment he'd hoped for. Frustrated by the monotonous job, and situated just below the environment he ached to be exposed to, he quit. He wasn't able to take advantage of the nearness to his intended career setting.

When youths' first job experiences are different from their expectations, they begin to identify working conditions they are better suited for and issues to be discussed in the next job interview.

Frequently youths are confronted with the realization that a job is more difficult than anticipated. The health of their response to difficulty is dependent

The Story of Frankie Q

Interviewer: "Is it difficult for those 15 years and older to get work around here?"

Frank: "Around here? I never have a problem. When I was going to high school, I got my working papers, got me a job in Sloan's. Part-time jobs, there is a lot of them. Kids, look at it this way, 'Well, I don't know, what do they pay? — maybe $3. Say, I'm going to work in McDonald's for $3 an hour!' At five hours a day, that's only $15 a day. So only part time they clear $45 a week.

"And they figure they can buy an ounce of smoke and roll it in joints and sell it. That's the way they look at it. They're not looking at it in terms of the money from a job being there every week, or that they're keeping their minds occupied. I was going to school. From school I had to go to work, from 4:00 to 9:00, to come home, to eat, to catch up on my work, and go to sleep. But, you know, I was doing it.

"I did that for about a year and a half. And I was making at that time maybe $2.00, $2.35 an hour.

"Then I dropped out of school; that's when I started working full time in the supermarket. From there I jumped into this CETA job fixing buildings over there on the corner of 14th Street, and then I saved a couple of my paychecks and I invested it in drugs, and I started making money, and I said, 'I don't need this job, I'm making $100 a week. I can make more a day... forget it.

"I used to go to work with $300 or $400 on me — man, I didn't want to work. So I quit. I was like that for three years. In less than three years I had $10,000 to my own account.

"Then I started going downhill 'cause I got caught up in my own drugs. I was psyching myself out. Saying I would never get caught up. I said I had it under control."

Editor's note: A few months after this interview, Joyce Nelson-Bowne, the interviewer, attended Frank's funeral. He had been murdered.

on their ability to respond to a challenge, the amount of training and support available, and their motivation for working. "I got a job to be able to pay for a car," says one youth. "So when I was working, I kept saying all those times when I really wanted to forget it right there, that I was working for a reason, my car, and that was worth it."

Setting a less tangible goal such as a college diploma, requires a high level of confidence and the ability to think abstractly and develop a long-range plan. A plan and a purpose help bridge gaps between stages in youths' lives.

"I'd never give up my school for working," explains 16-year-old Oscar. "My brothers left school and they went through a lot. They have lots of responsibilities and problems. I don't want that now. I want to go to school and then to college so I can have a career."

Sometimes youths' ambitions for a job are limited to "I just want some money, and a job, any old job would do." Then they find themselves excited by the responsibilities and begin to examine themselves, their interests, and their motivations more keenly. "At first I really didn't expect it to be nothing 'cause I was just doing it for a job. And I started getting interested in it, not just for the money. Now I look forward to coming here."

Besides motivation, young peoples' success in retaining a job hinges on their skill in interacting with other people. The troubles youths have at work often stem from poor interpersonal relations. Work relationships are influenced by their ability to talk and listen effectively, to make decisions, and to resolve conflicts.

Youths may resent being told what to do and frequently have difficulty taking orders from a supervisor. They do not always easily identify and express their needs and feelings, especially uncomfortable ones. They may be unsure of themselves because they have not been adequately oriented. They may be uncertain about the lines of communication and accountability.

Youths are aware that their most enjoyable job experiences occur when they get along with their bosses and coworkers. But the dynamics of job accountability affect relationships in ways youths may have never experienced before, further straining their weak social skills.

Many times a youth has job problems because of poor orientation. When an employer assumes a youth has the ability to fulfill responsibilities without special training, complications emerge. Youths unable to do the job may fear asking for help. They do not realize that on-the-job training is normal and legitimate. Fear of exposing their ignorance or of angering the boss makes them repress their confusion. Work tasks are partially and poorly handled; unidentified problems escalate, and youths quit in frustration or are fired for not doing the job satisfactorily.

One teenage girl who had been poorly oriented and was given no training was afraid to act without checking with her boss. Too afraid to ask for clarification of her responsibilities, she didn't say anything, got headaches, and grew to hate her job, blaming herself for her confusion and powerlessness.

When youths begin working, they experience feelings never expressed or dealt with before. "I learned I can get mad very easily sometimes, when I don't like something." If they are un-

comfortable with their anger, hurt, anxiety, and frustration, they may either attempt to suppress it or let the velocity of the feeling erupt, further escalating the problem. Evidence of repression often emerges in unsatisfactory job performance, subtle attempts at sabotage, sloppy work habits, outbursts of bitterness or resentment, stealing, tardiness, and absences.

Sometimes youths are assigned tasks unrelated to what they were hired for. Feeling used and resentful, a youth says, "I was supposed to be working with kids, and then sometimes they'd treat me like a janitor."

Other difficulties in adjusting to the job arise when youths feel "alone and different": the only teenager among adults, the only male among females, the only member of a particular ethnic group, or the only one without a high school diploma.

Another battle with value differences on the job occurs when youths encounter sex stereotyping among employers or employment services. In odd-job services, for example, boys are channeled into outdoor, maintenance, and physically demanding positions, girls into child-care, house cleaning, and physically passive jobs. Although many youths never question the appropriateness of this division of labor, others feel it limits their already narrow options. "They didn't know us dudes change diapers," says a sturdy little giant with a gentle touch. "I learned at home because of my baby twin sisters. In fact, they only gave me this job at the child-care center because there weren't no others left."

Unless youths have the opportunity to discuss their job troubles with someone, they will either blame themselves or the employer for the problem. Both responses aggravate the situation and lead to mutual dissatisfaction between employer and employee.

The failure to assess a youth's needs and abilities contributes to inadequate job orientation and training. This inhibits development of appropriate job skills and attitudes.

The Adult Perspective

Those in Position to Help

A 13-year-old native American from South Dakota expresses with exquisite sensitivity and wisdom the reality and challenge that he perceives for himself. His statement challenges adults responsible for helping youths to help themselves: "Your dream isn't the only dream in the world. Everybody has dreams, and it's like you've got to compete against their dreams and see which dream was wanted most... and if the other guy wanted it more, then I guess he gets it. But if you really want to set your mind on something, and you want it badly, you could go for it. At least that's something. If you don't get it, at least you had some part in it."

Adults have a sobering responsibility to help youths prepare for adulthood. The family provides the primary influence, but parents do not long remain the child's sole protector, guide, educator, and friend. The responsibility is soon shared, with varying degrees of success, by schools, communities, and employers.

Home and Parents

In a waterfront community in New England, Mrs. Williams and her husband live with their 11 children. Mrs. Williams speaks with pride of the projects in which a few of her children are involved. As they grew up they transferred their hobby interests to part-time jobs and then to careers.

Mrs. Williams stresses the necessity for cooperation and sharing in making the family experience positive. Family chores serve as an introduction to work, providing the child with a foundation of valuable social skills which can later be applied to the workplace. "We tell them, this is a family and not a 'one' situation, and selfishness is going to get you nowhere. You've got to work with people. It isn't a 'me' situation. Later on you'll have trouble keeping a job, if you think that way."

A job list of the household chores is organized and posted, showing the family members their daily and weekly responsibilities. Certain jobs are considered mandatory, to be completed without pay, while an additional list itemizes optional chores for which the children may receive payment if completed satisfactorily. The concepts of teamwork, mandatory responsibilities, volunteerism, and initiative are integrated into this family's life-style. These children are learning, practicing, and having positive work habits reinforced on a daily basis. Youths without supportive family environments to foster work attitudes and responsibilities are at a disadvantage, for the possibility of having other opportunities to learn these skills is uncertain.

Mrs. Williams believes the responsibility of providing her 11 children with work training will be completed as they each turn 15. "You're not going to take them at 15 or 16 and put them into jobs and tell them 'Now you've got to work.' You've got to start them younger or you're sunk."

Not all parents interviewed felt as confident as Mrs. Williams about preparing their children for work or were as aware of the need to do so. Sometimes time and energy is consum-

ed by their own problems, leaving few resources to give their children.

Besides trying to manage a maze of personal problems, parents are often confused about how to adjust to changing needs and values. They fear loss of authority, and have difficulty coping with children who demand independence.

A father of two teenagers in California expresses his frustration at being unable to influence or communicate with his children. "I can't get my children to go to church. I tell them to go, but they won't go. They get mad at me when I tell them something."

Conscientious parents who want to influence their children's development are frustrated by their lack of understanding and skills. For example, many parents are unaware of the importance of following up on their children's activities. Children's motivation comes primarily from sources outside of themselves. If not encouraged, they can fail because they are not able to persevere. Some parents attempt to motivate their children by making them aware of how much knowledge they lack. Having their achievement minimized in this way discourages youths and convinces them of their inferiority and of the probability of failure.

Where Pride Is Built

As a young man, I visited St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands while on a traveling/writing arrangement with the North American Newspaper Alliance. I loved the island... wanted to stay awhile. An engineer drowned, a schoolteacher took his job, and overnight I became the school teacher's replacement. The school, which covered grades 7 through 12, had a severe discipline problem. When briefed by the superintendent, I was told that my first goal would be to maintain order; if there was any time left over, I was then to focus on teaching.

Under the school's operating system, a bell rang at the end of each period and classes moved to other rooms. Each class had a homeroom with an assigned homeroom teacher. After being on the job only two weeks, I was asked if I would take over as the homeroom teacher for Class 7E... the teacher with this assignment was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I accepted with some concern, for the letter 'E' indicated the poorest quality students — the three-year staybacks, the uninterested, the troublemakers... the kind who would later become the hardcore of the island's unemployed youths. I shall never forget going into my first homeroom period. The noise was unbelievable, desks and chairs were a complete jumble, and students were hanging out of the windows. They didn't even notice me walk in. I took my bag, which was filled with books, and *slammed* it on top of a desk. Shocked silence filled the room.

I said: "Students, I am your new homeroom teacher, Mr. Tibbetts. I am here because I have heard that 7E is the worst class in the school." The silence broke. From all over came the exclama-

tions, "Taint so, Mr. Tibbetts, dem folks lie," and so forth and so forth. I put my hand up and said: "Quiet! I know it isn't true. You are my class and I can tell already that these stories are not true. Now I will tell you what we are going to do about it. We will make up signs that say that 7E is going to have the biggest of all parties at the end of the year. Then we will put these signs all around the room for the whole school — and the whole world — to see."

With enthusiastic application we went through the first session. This, in spite of a near riot at the end when 7D took over the room, saw the signs, and with roars of disapproval started to tear them down. As the 7E boys began to swing into action, I said: "No, let them tear down the signs. They know you're the best. They are just jealous. Hold it, we will leave like 7E with heads up." We did.

The next day was momentous. I'd made a pact with the class in order to avoid the noisy beginnings of a full class. I'd said: "Let's show the rest of the school the right way to go into a classroom. Tomorrow you will line up outside like soldiers — according to height. When I come around the corner of the building and see the proper lineup, I'll give the command, 'Left turn — march!' If you march in and take your seats so that I can't hear a sound, we are going to do something special. I shall put my fist in the air and shout, 'What's the best class in this school?' Then, I want all of you to come back loud and clear, with one voice, '7E!' The whole town will know."

Well, that's the way it worked. I came around the corner and there they were like soldiers, according to height, and ramrod straight — except that eyes were curled around to see my approval. And, when I nodded my head in deep approval, the heads in the whole line nodded with me. Then came the command, "Left turn — march!" There was no sound as they took their seats.

I put my fist in the air and shouted the question. The thundering "7E!" that came back was a shock wave to the other classes but a soul-rewarding cry to the pupils of 7E.

That was how it started. As we progressed through the year, I looked for and found many, many bases for group and individual pride. Interest... accomplishment... pride... it was all there. It was a great experience for me. I learned that an underachiever is not out; he's just down.

The story supports my tenet. All of us, and particularly unemployed youths, need a base of accomplishment. This is where pride is built. The argument is simple. Motivation starts with interest. Find out where each young person's interest lies. Then, set up a program to help him or her pursue that interest. Accomplishment will follow. Pride will follow accomplishment, and at that point we'll have a young person well on the road to becoming a good and productive citizen.

Hugh Tibbetts
Chairman, Youth Employment
Survey Advisory Council,
and President,
Thomas J. Lipton, Inc.

Many parents look to the school to make up for their own failure. Yet, frequent dissent was expressed over the schools' inability to equip youths with adequate academic skills and appropriate values and morals. One mother questioned the values expressed by an educational system that responds to troublesome youths by rejecting them. She believes the schools behave irresponsibly and present a model for dealing with conflict that certainly would be ineffective in a job setting. Concerned about a neighbor's teenage daughter, she says, "One girl was caught smoking in the bathroom. Right away they kicked her out of school. I don't think they should do that. They aren't going to learn a thing by going home and staying a couple of days."

Besides voicing concern for the social and moral character of schools, parents express dismay about their children not learning the basic academic skills. One man of 30, now a full-time janitor and stepfather of four children, reflects on his recent experience in school. "I went all the way through high school and didn't learn how to read. They used to just pass me. They wasted my time and I wasted their time." He wants his children to have things better, but feels powerless to assure this.

The power and rigidity of the school system intimidates some adults, especially those whose experience was regrettable and unrewarding. Raising children who are dependent on an educational system that handicapped their own development and their economic stability as adults is frightening. Such parents look for help elsewhere.

Parents of youths who attend Boys Clubs sometimes look to the Club for support. Mrs. Williams knows the Boys Club reinforces the values she and her husband advocate and helps her children develop social and interpersonal skills. She sees a symbiotic relationship between home, schools, and Boys Club. "I think the home and school and the Boys Club go together. One can't work without the others. And you don't take care of your kids just by yourself. The teachers and the Boys Club, they help to bring your kids up. I think it makes them better people. Like it made them get along with everybody. The first thing you have to do is get along with everybody to get a job."

Noting the special care her children give to something they've achieved or earned through working, she suggests parents, Boys Clubs, and schools work together to motivate youths to set goals, and then provide the assistance needed for youths to attain those goals.

Mrs. Williams summarizes her philosophy about the importance of preparing youths for work: "Preparing for employment should have high priority because it's the rest of their lives. And if you're not ready for it, you'll be a failure right from the start. Although it starts at home, we parents need lots of help from schools and places like the Boys Club, where my children spend so much time growing up.

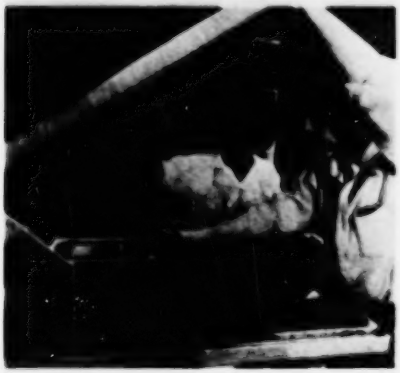
Schools and Educators

While the educational picture is grim for many youths, reforms are taking place. The school system seems to be attempting to introduce more job-related programs. Many of these begin on the high school level, unfortunately too late for many dropouts. Other schools are making the shift, stressing a combination of vocational and academic programming as an alternative to the strictly academic programs offered in the past.

Sandra Marvel works at a school in northern Texas which is upgrading the image of vocational education and establishing career exploration programs. She believes people are frequently unaware of jobs other than the very visible ones they come in contact with. "Most people don't realize that there are market researchers, and there are

managers of centers such as Boys Clubs. They think in terms of doctor, lawyer, Indian chief."

Sandra describes her astonishment at the way students randomly select the classes that would later decide their careers. "I guess up to maybe a year ago it was a very haphazard decision. They may have known that they needed some vocational training, and they may have had some idea of what they wanted to do, but oftentimes they could be very easily swayed — by their friends or by the fact that the class was filled."



Sandra views people as frequently being locked into the system, limiting their career choices by pressures from their environment. Middle-class kids are frequently discouraged from experimenting with vocational training while working and lower-class children may fear setting goals for the professions. "Sometimes I think the picture we have of vocational education is people not making it academically. I think sometimes there is a stigma attached."

Sandra believes that youths should be shown the necessity of learning basic skills such as reading for use on the job. "You cannot be a dummy and be in electronics or machine trades. We've had some very high-level courses with some very technical books. If you can't read them you can't do this. There should be no vocational program that doesn't have a strong academic component."

Perhaps the most exciting changes in education are taking place within community colleges. The head of one midwestern community college expresses his view that its role is to reach people that normally lack the opportunity to attend college, exposing them to opportunities never before available to them. "What we want to do is start at an early age showing them that there is a possibility for them to change their lives. But what we have to do is start selling the idea that they are in control of their destiny. And one way to do that is to know what is available in a job, what kind of training is necessary to get that job, where they can get the training, and how they can finance it."

Communities and Employers

Employers view youths as having many problems hindering their employability. Many think this to be a direct result of youths' inability to obtain experiences which would help them to develop appropriate attitudes and habits at a young age.

Some employers believe that children need to experience responsibilities and problems in order to grow. A father and employer who encourages his own children to work for what they want expresses his fear that others discourage their children from asserting independence. "I think that parents are a big problem. They don't believe their children ought to work if they're going to school. They don't even believe that kids should buy their own car today. They really don't get the value of being self-made and leading your own life. So they get a free load and hang onto it. It's like welfare. Once they get on welfare, they stay on it."

Most employers viewed stringent labor regulations and minimum wage requirements as prohibitive to their hiring youths. One expresses his views that these laws work against both

youths and employers, "I don't think any employer is anti-youth. But I may as well pay somebody full time. It's gotten too expensive for me to take the kids off the street and give them a job for the summer vacation."

Another employer believes that there should be a special pay rate for youths that would not put them into competition with adults who could do the job better.

Sometimes employer attitudes cause them to be unwilling to hire youths. Outright discrimination against minorities often plays a role in determining who will get hired. One employer expresses his views. "An Indian's chances of employment really aren't as good as a normal person's. I hate to say it this way but they're basically not an ambitious person." Rather than placing the blame on a social system that doesn't offer opportunities to minorities, this employer puts the blame on the individual who is not able to find work through this system.

Other forms of discrimination are more subtle. One large employer spoke of an amusement park's unwillingness to hire the handicapped and describes how, when they are hired, they are put into positions where they will not be visible in order to avoid offending the public. This stress on appearance affects not only the handicapped but anyone who is mildly unusual. As this employer explains, "You can't have people with complexion problems, you can't have people that are overweight or very short or tall. This is because the guests come here to get away from what they see in their lives, and they don't want to see anybody that's a little unusual."

This attitude may create the feeling in inexperienced youths that they are different and not as employable as "normal" people.

Many employers believe that youth employment is someone else's problem. One unconcerned employer mentions using youths as a last resort — to be hired only when all other labor sources fail. Such lack of interest characterizes the attitude of industry toward youth employment in Hampton Roads, a bustling waterfront community.

A businessman and Boys Club board member describes how only those directly affected by poverty are concerned about its existence. "The only people that are interested are the people constantly being bitten by the snake, the people that live within the pit." Almost no firm in the community would offer jobs to youths, and the few jobs they did offer were often menial. One board member describes the type of work he offered young people. "What we do with youngsters is put them in the back clipping the extra thread off the garments."

Perhaps the most common sort of employer is the one who sees his role simply in terms of making a profit, viewing his responsibility only toward that end. "The average employer doesn't want to fool with someone he doesn't really have a lot of confidence in. He doesn't want to give someone a break and gamble on them."

Employers with a more personal relationship with youths generally have a better experience with youth employees. Dick Prell, the manager of a restaurant in South Dakota, believes he has an important responsibility: "You realize that you have more control over these youths as an employer than most of the time their parents or teachers do, 'cause you control their pocket expense, and peer pressure, so often based on having money, is a major concern to any youth."

These open-minded employers take a more personal approach to workers' needs, and are more flexibile than the average employer. They recognize that youths' motives for working differ from adults', and they need to be supervised differently. Another employer stated her perception of this difference bet-

ween working youths and adults. "With an older person, you're regulating. With a youth, you're formulating, and you should feel your responsibility."

The skills employers look for in youths are generally social rather than technical. A willingness to work and the ability to take the initiative are qualities employers constantly describe as desirable. One employer pointed out that many aspects of a job cannot be explained; therefore, the employee must be willing to put out the extra energy required to think independently.

An almost universal complaint of employers is the current lack of pride in work. Employers feel the work ethic is a thing of the past. Some see this as having serious consequences. "There's no pride left in a job well done. The work ethic is gone. I think in the next ten years, that's going to be the hardest thing employers are going to have to combat."

Most employers interviewed did not so much desire to hire a trained employee as to have people with the ability to communicate and get along with others. Oddly enough, *many employers prefer to hire inexperienced people*. This contrasts sharply with the impression of youths interviewed that employers generally demand some experience or skills.

As one employer stated, "We don't really look for a tremendous amount of skill or qualifications outside of good moral character, willingness to work, these types of things."

Most employees feel youth employment programs should receive top priority. "Youth employment is an investment in the future. We're seeing it now. If a kid's got money in his pocket he ain't going to take the chance to run out and steal."

Boys Club Staff

Unemployment is the significant problem in economically deprived areas — the areas where most Boys Clubs are located. If youths are deprived of the opportunity to work, poverty is passed from generation to generation.

"The thing I'm finding is it's cyclical, what's happening with the unemployed. The kids whose parents are unemployed will be unemployed themselves and will probably have kids who are unemployed," says one Boys Club worker.

"More kids that live in the ghetto have the attitude of not working because their parents don't work. Even though their parents don't say to them, 'Don't get a job,' the attitude is still there."

While the difficulty of dealing with this problem is evident, one worker felt that Boys Clubs could really make a difference in youths' lives. "These kids need to know that there are people in the world that do care."

Staff realizes the importance of involving parents in programming. One staff member describes how, after a frustrating summer of attempting to deal with irresponsible youths, he realized the problem was that parents had not been included in work programs, and he planned to remedy this situation. "I'd like to have the parents come in for a discussion-type group activity such as role playing, with many youngsters acting out being the employer and employee and such things. The parents must realize that their youngsters are growing into the age group where they must be employable."

One Boys Club worker blamed employers for many youths' problems. He describes his own experience at a large corporation. "They assume you don't want to work. They try to snow you, make you feel very stupid. They don't care if you're sick, as long as you're on the job. I think their biggest problem is the greediness."

Compounding this problem is the fact that today's youths lack work opportunities previously available, which

had helped them grow and build character. A staff member compares his own experience with those of youths today. "A lot of us grew up during the Depression years and it was a time when there wasn't much work. We had to develop a keen sense of mind in order to make it then. Knowing how to save your resources was important. It was good for us and gave us a good perspective on how to attack the problems of the world. There is nothing better for young people, whether they're poor or wealthy, than to get a sense of work in spite of their economic situation. The kids are losing something. They don't get a sense of working for somebody else. They miss out on getting that sense of achievement."

Boys Clubs are attempting to provide more meaningful jobs for youths than they would perhaps have been able to find on their own. Along with direct employment training, the staff stresses a need to teach job skills. Job-related concepts such as how to budget are sometimes entirely unknown to job seekers. Many youngsters have no understanding of the concept of planning ahead. Staff members felt that Boys Club youths in particular have difficulty comprehending abstractions. They relate best to their own experiences. Thus, employment and life skills programs need to be based on demonstration.

A balance between spending money for needs and for pleasure must be struck. Some children, even when working, refuse to buy anything for themselves, seemingly because of their feelings of worthlessness. A Boys Club worker described one such case. "Lorenzo gets paid once a week. He wants to put all his money in a savings account. That might sound like a good idea, but it's very important, I think, for a young person, for anybody, to benefit from working. The kids need to be taught to do something to make themselves feel good, too. Not just to get the money and mom says you have to put it in the savings account."

"Sometimes, I feel as though I am alone. My friends and I will joke and say, we just can't get good help these days.

"I don't know if it's been like this for hundreds of years or whatever or if is a special problem now. Has it always been the same? That is what I don't know."

Wayne, age 16
Providence, Rhode Island

"With a lot of kids, you can tell when something is bothering them: They will just sit around and don't do anything. Other kids will come up to me and ask a thousand different questions and that is how you know something is on their mind. It causes you to start thinking about what is going on in their life at home, in school, on the streets, with friends. You just listen to them. The most important thing is to listen to them. They need to talk to somebody. They don't really care if you understand all the time, they just want you to listen. That's so important. . . "

James Lafayette, staff member
Schenectady Boys Club,
New York

Youths are encouraged to communicate their needs to employers. This is another area in which they are frequently unaware of the consequences of their actions. "They don't call in if they're not going to be there. They might not even be aware that they would lose their jobs."

And there is another side of the prob-

lem. "The employers themselves are just not aware of youth employment problems. They might think it's great to hire a strong-backed boy for a custodial position or whatever, but they don't communicate with him."

Although Clubs view the youth employment problem as critical, most believe it would be a duplication of services already offered by other agencies to offer training in generic skills or vocational areas. The staff generally see a more important role for the Club in training for positive work habits and attitudes, getting along in society, succeeding in an interview, and so on. As a staff person observed, "More youngsters are fired for lack of social skills than for any other reason. For not being on time, for being unable to get along with co-workers or the boss, for thinking that being there rather than being productive is what work is all about."

Another staff member describes the importance of Boys Club staff perceiving themselves as working role models, since frequently they are the only ones the youths will come in contact with. "Most of the kids we come in contact with aren't taught a good work ethic at home. That's why it's important for us to set a good example at work regardless of rain, snow, sleet, tornado, anything — we're at work. Every time they walk in that door they need to see our face."

He sees an important role for Boys Club in giving youths the motivation that is frequently lacking in their homes. "You've got to push them sometimes. That's the way it is, because they're not pushed anywhere else."

Conclusions and Implications:

The Kind of Help Needed

Stooped over with discouragement and the weight of his thoughts, Carlos was trying to make sense of the fact that his and so many other young people's well-intentioned desires were continually blocked by adults. He said, "I finally realized why so many people are ignorant — because ignorance is free and people want their freedom. I wonder how many adults ever really try to understand and help us kids. Not enough to outweigh the ones who would rather ignore us!"

In achieving the purpose of the survey — to define a role for Boys Club in responding to the employment needs of its members — it became startlingly clear that youths desperately need adults to speak out and raise awareness of the problems youths face. Apathy, disregard, and ignorance on the part of adults will not enable youths to receive and use the resources and help they need to develop appropriate job attitudes and skills.

This section is a list of survey conclusions and implications for Boys Clubs. It is hoped the findings will prompt discussion, provoke additional insights into the youth employment problem, and stimulate the development of employment programs that can be implemented locally. It is hoped that groups engaged in such dialogue will be composed of young people, parents, educators, board members, and business people — a cross section of those most immediately involved with this problem. There are many variables in the youth employment equation, and each relates to one of many different but interdependent realities.

Development of Motivation and Self-Confidence

1. *Conclusion*
Youths' level of self-esteem is an important barometer of their job success. Lack of self-esteem makes it difficult to persevere, to establish firm relationships, and to learn new skills.

Implication
Boys Clubs should provide youths with opportunities to develop self-esteem by identifying their strengths, giving them positive feedback, helping them acquire skills, and giving them recognition.

2. *Conclusion*
Youths often lack self-confidence because they believe they have no credible work experience. Yet their life experiences are rich with lessons that have direct application in the work place.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to help youths translate the skills of everyday living — interacting with people, being reliable and responsible, taking on household chores or part-time jobs — into job-related skills.

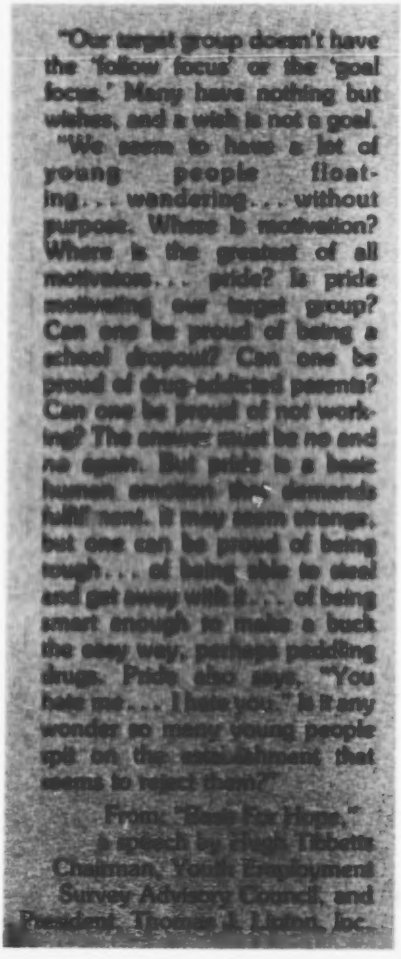
3. *Conclusion*
Youths with goals are more motivated than those without. Many youths have at least two goals, one secure and clear-

ly attainable, and another farsighted and ambitious.

Implication
Boys Clubs can help youths learn to set and plan to attain goals.

4. *Conclusion*
When the desire to explore, take initiative, and assume responsibility is continually ignored or blocked, young people become frustrated, angry, discouraged, and apathetic.

Implication
Boys Clubs should challenge, support, and reward youths for taking risks and demonstrating initiative.


"Our target group doesn't have the 'follow focus' or the 'goal focus.' Many have nothing but wishes, and a wish is not a goal.

"We seem to have a lot of young people floating . . . wandering . . . without purpose. Where is motivation? Where is the greatest of all motivators . . . pride? Is pride motivating our target group? Can one be proud of being a school dropout? Can one be proud of drug-addicted parents? Can one be proud of not working? The answer must be no and no again. But pride is a basic human emotion that demands fulfillment. It may seem strange, but one can be proud of being tough . . . of being able to steal and get away with it . . . of being smart enough to make a buck the easy way, perhaps pedaling drugs. Pride also says, 'You hate me . . . I hate you.' Is it any wonder so many young people spit on the establishment that seems to reject them?"

From: "Basis For Hope," a speech by Hugh Roberts, Chairman, Youth Employment Survey Advisory Council, and President, Thomas J. Lipton, Inc.

Development of Work Attitudes and Skills

1. *Conclusion*
Youths' first exposure to work is at home. It is here that attitudes toward work are fostered.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to develop ways to assist parents in helping their children learn about work attitudes, expectations, and experiences.

2. *Conclusion*
All youths recognize that possessing a high school diploma has a critical effect on their job opportunities, even though some may consider specific academic courses a waste of time.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to show youths the practical applications of their academic work to jobs, careers, and their lives in general. Youths need encouragement and support in maintaining grade-level competencies.

3. *Conclusion*
Parents of Boys Club members advocate a cooperative relationship between home, school, and Boys Club in assisting youths in preparing for work.

Implication
Boys Clubs should serve as youth advocates, coordinating the services and support of home, school, and Club.

4. *Conclusion*
Nearly every aspect of a Boys Club program also has a direct relationship to developing work skills: filling out membership applications, interacting with others in informal activities, participating in organized groups, and fulfilling obligations.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to creatively apply a work orientation — appropriate to each age group — to every aspect of their programs.

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5. *Conclusion*
Many Boys Club members identify the Club as a refuge, a place to go to stay out of trouble and off the streets.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to promote the image of the club as a place to grow and to learn how to prepare for the future.

6. *Conclusion*
For many Boys Club youths, their first and only job experience is at the Club. While this is an enjoyable experience, it may not adequately prepare them for work in a less supportive setting.

Implication
Boys Club staff need to incorporate standards of the private sector into youth work programs and provide youths with a thorough orientation to the world of work.

7. *Conclusion*
Most youths lack a generic job skill which would make them more employable, confident, and self-sufficient.

Implication
Boys Clubs have the capacity to become vocational laboratories and to expose and equip youths with a variety of job-related skills that can lead to long-range career opportunities.

Acquisition of Job and Career Skills

1. *Conclusion*
There is an expectation among adults and youths alike that work sense is common sense and that youths should be able to enter the world of work without special help or training. This mistaken idea usually leads to disappointment and failure.

Implication
Boys Clubs should make adults and youths aware that this expectation is not viable and that youths must be exposed to appropriate employment preparation programs and job search strategies.

2. *Conclusion*
Youths are eager for and learn best from firsthand, practical experience.

Implication
Employment preparation programs need to utilize experimental learning methods so youths will learn through practice and application.

3. *Conclusion*
Many youths are blocked by their own insecurities and uncertainties about how to look for a job. Those who appear unmotivated or lazy may be fearful and uncertain.

Implication
Employment preparation programs need to focus on the identification, expression, and management of fears and insecurities.

4. *Conclusion*
Youths who have grown up outside the mainstream culture have difficulty appreciating and adapting to the values and attitudes of the work place.

Implication
Employment preparation programs need to be developed based on the values and language to which youths are accustomed.

5. *Conclusion*
Youths view careers as more desirable than jobs because they provide more security, autonomy, and money. Many youths have never been encouraged to develop a career and therefore are reluctant to consider the possibility that one may be appropriate for and accessible to them.

Implication
Boys Clubs should actively encourage youths to pursue careers by developing opportunities for them to identify interests and aptitudes and to explore their applications in possible careers.

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6. *Conclusion*
Youths who recognize that entry-level jobs are prerequisites to more challenging positions enjoy work more than youths who fail to understand these long-range benefits.

Implication
Boys Clubs should teach youths about the need to develop a satisfying career by beginning at the bottom and working their way up.

7. *Conclusion*
For Boys Club youths who are unprepared to work in the private sector because of special disabilities, the Boys Club becomes a critical learning environment.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to develop within the Club job opportunities for youths with special needs or disabilities and to provide the support, supervision, and training needed to make such youths employable.

8. *Conclusion*
Many youths are eager to work before they can legally obtain a job; therefore, many youths' first job experiences are often illegal, according to labor regulations. Youths often believe they are financially exploited, which is frequently true.

Implications
Temporary, part-time, one-day, task-to-completion jobs need to be developed for youths ready to work but too young to be hired. Appropriate compensation, financial and otherside, needs to be awarded.

9. *Conclusion*
Many youths are often anxious about the quality of their job performances, yet they do not ask for help from a supervisor for fear of being reprimanded or fired.

Implication
Young people need a comprehensive job orientation specific to the job they have obtained, especially if it is their first job. The orientation should clarify specific job responsibilities, unwritten expectations and norms, and performance standards of employers; identify lines of communications and accountability; and explain salaries, benefits, pay periods, and grievance procedures.

Job Development

1. *Conclusion*
The primary sources of jobs for those youths who work are friends and family. But many youths lack the connections to obtain a job.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to be the connections for youths and to develop job opportunities for them.

2. *Conclusion*
Most employers are willing to hire a youth recommended and trained for employment by the Boys Club, preferring a socially mature and adjusted youth who is eager to work.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to develop relationships with communty business people, refer properly trained youths, and provide follow-up support.

3. *Conclusion*
Employers sometimes misinterpret a youth's lack of appropriate job preparation as a poor work attitude. Conflicts arise from the inability to communicate.

Implication
Boys Clubs can help employers and supervisors learn about youths' personal and employment needs and acquire effective supervisory skills. Making opportunities for youths and employers to talk with each other in a nonwork setting would aid in developing rapport and mutual understanding.

4. *Conclusion*
Some employers believe it is not their responsibility to get involved in youth employment problems.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to educate business people in their communities to the immediate and long-range effects of youth unemployment. Specifically, Boys Club board members who are themselves members of the business community could help by itemizing specific ways business people can respond.

5. *Conclusion*
Most employers find labor regulations and the minimum wage to be deterrents in hiring youths.

Implication
Boys Clubs need to consider strategies to influence policy changes in labor regulations which will enhance the employment opportunities for youths while still maintaining the special protections for young people.

6. *Conclusion*
Some employers recognize that they may have more influence on youths than their parents or teachers because they control youths' income.

Implication
Because they have such power, employers should be advised to use their control and influence wisely.

7. *Conclusion*
Boys Club board members are generally unaware of how the youth unemployment problem affects Boys Club youths, and of their ability to influence change in this area.

Implication
Boys Club board members need to learn how unemployment affects youths and specific ways they can contribute the necessary influence and resources to help solve the problem.

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Recommended Courses of Action

The conclusions of this survey show that the youth employment problems extend beyond such symptoms as the lack of jobs and large numbers of unemployed youths. There is a need for a comprehensive developmental approach involving several strategies which can be integrated into services dealing with the youth employment problem.

Strategies should help increase awareness of the youth employment problem and explain it to adults in positions of power and influence, whether they be the parents of children or the presidents of major corporations. The need to articulate the immediate and long-range effects of youth employment is critical. Youth unemployment is hurting young people now and will have a severe and lasting impact on society.

Teachers, advisers, and others who influence young people's growth and development need to integrate into their services methods of developing job-appropriate attitudes and skills. They need to reinforce the relationship between a youth's life experience and the world of work.

Methods of identifying and rapidly disseminating successful youth employment programs need to be developed. Forums for sharing information and for discussing ways to replicate approaches and programs need to be established.

The complexity of the youth employment problem calls for a multidisciplinary approach.

The Boys Club program model with its youth development emphasis establishes a foundation on which to build comprehensive youth employment initiatives. The following program initiatives have been suggested by the survey conclusions and implications to be most appropriate for emphasis in Boys Clubs.

Education

Boys Clubs need to work closely with school systems to provide supplemental education services that will enhance youths' educational development and provide them with the challenges, supports, and rewards fundamental to the development of the motivation so necessary for educational achievement.

Career Exploration

Boys Clubs need to provide youths with extensive exposure to a wide variety of careers and to encourage them in the development of career plans and goals.

Skills for Daily Living

Boys Clubs need to help youths develop skills necessary to take charge of and manage all aspects of their lives. There is a critical need to help youths learn how to solve problems, make decisions, and establish goals, as well as to assist in developing skills in communication and in relating to others.

Job Preparation

Boys Clubs need to help youths acquire skills needed to secure and retain jobs.

Skill Training

Boys Clubs need to provide youths with opportunities to develop skills that are not necessarily job specific but are applicable to a variety of job and career situations.

Job Development and Placement

Boys Clubs need to develop a variety of job experiences for members, utilizing more fully the resources of the Club and the community. There are numerous models for helping young people find work that can be adapted to local conditions and situations.

Advocacy

Boys Club staff members need to be vigilant advocates in the community, continually seeking to obtain the support and services essential to the healthy development of youths' lives. Policies that impact adversely on youths need to be identified. Boys Clubs need to speak out vigorously on behalf of youth.

Boys Club Sites for Youth Employment Survey

Boys Club of Billings and Yellowstone County
Billings, Montana

Boys Club of Buena Park
Buena Park, California

Boys Club of Chattanooga
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Crime Prevention Association of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dayton Boys Club
Dayton, Ohio

Boys Club of Denver
Denver, Colorado

Boys Club of Escambia
Pensacola, Florida

Hampton Roads Boys Club
Newport News, Virginia

Boys Club of South Bay Area, San Ysidro Unit
Imperial Beach, California

Los Angeles Boys Club
Los Angeles, California

Metropolitan Atlanta Boys Club
Atlanta, Georgia

Boys Club of Metropolitan Detroit
Detroit, Michigan

The Boys Club of New York
New York, New York

North Little Rock Boys Club
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Boys Club of Parkersburg
Parkersburg, West Virginia

Providence Boys Club
Providence, Rhode Island

Boys Club of Rapid City
Rapid City, South Dakota

Boys Club of San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas

Schenectady Boys Club
Schenectady, New York

Boys Club of Seattle & King County
Seattle, Washington

Boys Club of Topeka
Topeka, Kansas

Boys Club of Wichita Falls
Wichita Falls, Texas

Boys Clubs of America
771 First Avenue
New York, NY 10017